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EDITORS: TODAY IS SATURDAY, SEPT. 8

BY JOE TRENTON

GANNETT NEWS SERVICE

WASHINGTON, D.C. - THE EXPANSION OF A SECRET SOVIET MILITARY FACILITY IN CUBA IS A DIRECT RESULT OF U.S. DEVELOPMENT TESTS OF A LASER WARHEAD DESTRUCTION SYSTEM SCHEDULED TO BE ORBITED IN 1983 BY THE AIR FORCE VERSION OF THE SPACE SHUTTLE, THE WILMINGTON (Del.) NEWS JOURNAL REPORTED IN A COPYRIGHTED STORY TODAY.

TOP-LEVEL ACTIVE AND RETIRED AIR FORCES CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY, NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCY AND SENATE INTELLIGENCE COMMITTEE SOURCES SAY THE SOVIETS BEGAN EXPANDING A SECRET ELECTRONIC LISTENING POST SOUTH OF HAVANA IN 1977 WHEN THEIR SPY SATELLITES DISCOVERED THE WARHEAD DESTRUCTION SYSTEM.

THE STILL-SECRET U.S. SYSTEM USES A SERIES OF SATELLITES THAT CONTAIN POWERFUL LASER DEVICES WHICH WILL BE ABLE TO LOCK ON TO THE TRAJECTORY OF SOVIET WARHEADS ENROUTE TO AMERICAN TARGETS AND DESTROY THEM BEFORE THEY REACH THEIR DESTINATION.

THE 3,000 RUSSIAN TROOPS WHOSE EXISTENCE WAS REVEALED PUBLICLY ONLY LAST WEEK, ARE IN CUBA TO OPERATE THIS SATELLITE SPY SYSTEM, NOT FOR MILITARY PURPOSES, SOURCES SAID.

THE WHITE HOUSE, THROUGH A SPOKESMAN FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL, HAD NO COMMENT ON THE LASER WARHEAD DESTRUCTION SYSTEM.

THE FAST-GROWING CUBAN MILITARY COMPLEX, ORIGINALLY SET UP IN 1962 AFTER THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS, IS NOT A NEW LISTENING POST. THE BASE HAS BEEN EXPANDED BY INCREMENTS OVER THE YEARS, ACCORDING TO DR. RAYMOND S. CLINE OF THE GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES IN WASHINGTON, D.C., WHO IS A FORMER INTELLIGENCE CHIEF FOR BOTH THE CIA AND STATE DEPARTMENT. CLINE'S ANALYSIS WAS CONFIRMED BY SOURCES AT THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL.

IN A STATEMENT ISSUED YESTERDAY, PRESIDENT CARTER SAID THE SOVIET PRESENCE IN CUBA POSED NO "MILITARY THREAT" TO THE UNITED STATES.

THE NEWS JOURNAL HAS LEARNED THAT PRESIDENT CARTER'S NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR, ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI, WAS GIVEN A DETAILED 25-PAGE REPORT BY VICE ADMIRAL ROBERT INMAN, NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCY DIRECTOR, CONFIRMING THE INCREASED SOVIET PRESENCE IN CUBA LAST MAY. INMAN'S OFFICE SAID HE WOULD HAVE NO OFFICIAL COMMENT ON THE MATTER.